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WO 602 Public Worship: Practicum

Lester Ruth

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Syllabus

WO602 Public Worship: Practicum (3 hours; Credit/No Credit)

Dr. Lester Ruth; Spring, 2004

Prerequisite: a course in the range of WO510-549

Professor's information:

Dr. Lester Ruth; BC (Beeson) 218; 859-858-2175 or 859-219-9166;
lester_ruth@asburyseminary.edu; Standard office hours: 1:10-2:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Other times can be scheduled. Telephone calls are much preferred over emails at any time. If an email is sent, please note that it is class-related in the subject line. I will also eat lunch in the cafeteria on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Course Description:

This course will be an introduction to the planning and conducting of public worship through the study and performance of the services used in the denominations represented by the students in the class. The focus will be on the practical aspects of meaningfully leading worship. The course will consist of discussion and practicum with an emphasis on practicing the leadership of worship. Students will be expected to "perform" worship services (baptism, Communion, marriage, and a funeral) as well as specific acts of worship leadership (praying extemporaneously and from a written text, leading singing, reading Scripture) during class time in order to gain a sense of being comfortable in the performative aspects of worship leadership.

Course Objectives

Students completing this course will be able to:

- 1) read and pray graciously in a manner appropriate for Christian worship in the student's tradition;
- 2) plan and conduct the following rites/services in a manner both gracious and appropriate for Christian worship in the student's tradition and cultural context (Communion, baptism, wedding, and a funeral); and
- 3) articulate the theological importance of embodying grace in leading Christian worship.

Course requirements:

- 1) attendance and reading to the end that the student can participate fully and well in class discussions
- 2) compiling a detailed list, where available, of liturgical resources, standard liturgical books, and liturgical publishing houses for each student's tradition (due on last class day)
- 3) satisfactory fulfillment of in-class practicums for conducting the following rites/services in a manner consistent with one's own tradition: Communion, baptism, wedding, and funeral
- 4) satisfactory fulfillment of in-class practicums for conducting the following activities of worship (reading Scripture, praying extemporaneously, creating prayers, praying from a written text; preaching)

Grading:

The class is offered credit/no credit. To receive credit for the class the student must complete all the requirements listed above in a timely and full manner.

Texts and materials:

--instructional practicum video by the professor

--Schmit, Clayton J. *Public Reading of Scripture: A Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.

--Schmit, Clayton J. *Too Deep for Words: A Theology of Liturgical Expression*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002.

--Stookey, Laurence Hull. *Let the Whole Church Say Amen! A Guide for Those who Pray in Public*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

The student will also need copies of the book containing her/his denominational worship resources (the *Book of Worship* for United Methodists; the polity book for many other Wesleyan denominations) and the denomination's main songbook.

The instructional video should be returned by the last class day.

People Requirement:

Because of the small size of the class and it being all men, when it comes to practicing baptisms and weddings, the students will need to find volunteers from outside of class to fill out the participants needed.

In the services where there are several roles to be fulfilled (readers, pray-ers, etc.), students are encouraged to get their classmates to perform these roles in order to maximize the practical element of the course.

Classroom

Please also note that the classes may shift classrooms from time to time as the course progresses. Be attentive to where the class has been told to assemble for the next meeting.

Sermons

A short sermon of 10 minutes or less will be required in either the student's administration of a wedding or of a funeral. In either case, as the sermon is prepared, pay attention to the opening paragraph in your denomination's rite. Use the theological interpretation of the event there as the basis for your sermon.

Variety in Presidency: Establishing a Context

When it comes to planning and presiding at the student's weddings and funerals, it is strongly encouraged that students consider placing the wedding in one sort of church context and the funeral in another. The difference could be tied to culture, race, urban/suburban/rural location, economic and educational level, or style/ceremonial level. The student should come prepared to discuss how particular context shapes presidency.

Variety in Presidency: Understanding the People

Presiding at pastoral rites always takes place with specific people, not people in the abstract. Give some thought to who the people are. The student should come prepared to discuss how the particular people involved shapes presidency. To assist you in that manner, the following materials have been put on reserve in the library. Use them if you need help visualizing particular people in need of grace.

For a couple bringing a young child for infant baptism: Debra Rienstra, *Great with Child*, chapters 14-15.

For a faithful Christian woman who dies of cancer: Groopman, *The Anatomy of Hope*, chapter 5, for the story of Barbara Wilson.

For an older Christian man for whom the death of his wife is agonizing: C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*.

Course schedule:

Feb. 11 Course introduction; posture for prayer; extemporaneous praying; grace/graceful/gracious

Feb. 18 Prayer (Stookey exercises 1-3); Reflection (Schmidt *Too Deep*, chapter 1); Practicum (Schmidt *Public Reading*, prepare chapters 1 and 2 with exercises)

Feb. 25 Prayer (Stookey exercises 4-5); Reflection (Schmidt *Too Deep*, chapter 2); Practicum (Schmidt *Public Reading*, prepare chapters 3 and 4 with exercises)

March 3 Prayer (Stookey exercises 6-8); Reflection (Schmidt *Too Deep*, chapter 3); Practicum (Schmidt *Public Reading*, prepare chapters 5, being able to do exercises in this chapter)

March 10 Prayer (Stookey exercises 9-10); Reflection (Schmidt *Too Deep*, chapter 4); Practicum: the Lord's Supper

March 17 Prayer (Stookey exercises 11-12); Reflection (Schmidt *Too Deep*, chapter 5 (abbreviated class; we will depart at 2 p.m.))

March 24 Prayer (Stookey exercises 13-14); Reflection (Schmidt *Too Deep*, chapter 6); Practicum: baptisms with Lord's Supper

April 7 Prayer (Stookey exercises 15-16); Reflection (Schmidt *Too Deep*, chapter 7); Practicum: baptisms with Lord's Supper

April 14 Prayer (Stookey exercises 17-18); Practicum: Embodying Grace in Different Cultures (To prepare for this class please read the following material on reserve and do the following assignment: read from Kathy Black's book on reserve *Worship Across Cultures* two of the following three: the chapter on Hispanic-American Worship Practices, the chapter on African-American Worship Practices, or one of the chapters on an Asian-American group. Develop a list of insights on how culture setting affects worship leadership in the manner of preaching, the manner of praying, the manner of

making music, sensibility to time, awareness and use of the body, language and major theological images and metaphors, assessment and use of space, leadership and community)

April 21 Prayer (Stookey exercises 19-21); Practicum: Weddings

April 28 Prayer (Stookey, all the interludes); Practicum: Weddings

May 5 Prayer (Stookey, all the appendices); Practicum: Funerals

May 12 Practicum: Funerals; Concluding notes

Due: list of denominational resources

Class Rhythm

1) First, asking and answering: What was the most important thing you learned about prayer from the Stookey exercises?

Volunteer opens class in prayer.

2) Then, asking and answering: What was the most important theological insight you gained from the Schmidt reading?

3) Next, practicum elements with in-class reflection

4) Finally, as necessary, anticipating what's ahead.

Covenant

Understanding that a class of this sort--with in-class performance subject to the verbal review of others--is an intimidating situation, I commit myself, in union with my classmates, to the terms of the following covenant:

- All critique of others is to be given with gentleness and graciousness, genuinely offered in the hope that his or her improvement will be of ultimate benefit to God's church; and

- All critique of myself is to be received with graciousness, humility, and humor, genuinely accepted in the hope that my improvement will be of ultimate benefit to God's church.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(to be filled out by each student at the beginning of the semester)